Telecom Circle. The bifurcation of Ahmcdabad Telecom District into two administrative units has not been found justified on the basis of existing policy of creating secondary switching Areas.

(c) Question docs not arise.

STD Facilities in Rural Areas of Andhra Pradesh

1018. SHRI V. HANUMANTHA RAO: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that STD calls do not matcrilise easily between Hyderabad and rural areas of Andhra Pradesh; and

(b) whether Government propose to improve STD calling facility to rural areas in Andhra Pradesh in 1995-96?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATION (SHRI SUKH RAM): (a) No. Sir. Quality of STD service in Andhra Pradesh as judged by the STD call completion rate is quite satisfactory.

(b) Yes, Sir. the quality of STD service in rural areas of Andhra Pradesh is planned to be further imporved during 1995-96 by augmenting the number of STD circuits and also by provision of reliable transmission meida such as U.H.F. radio, optical fibre and cable PCM systems.

Funds to Panchayats for Afforestation of Villages

1019. SHRI MOHAN BABU: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government would sanction funds directly to Gram Panchayats for afforestation of villages;

(b) whether any proposal have been received from Andhra Pradesh Government in this regard; and

(c) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT & FORESTS (SHRI RAJESTH PILOT): (a) The Ministry of Environment and Forests does not have a scheme for sanctioning funds directly to Gram Panchayats for afforestation of villages. The Ministry has however taken a decision recently to recognise Panchayats at par with Non-Governmental organisations to enable them to avail of financial assistance under various schemes of Ministry to promote afforestation and tree plantation in .villages.

(b) and (c) No. sir.

Awards for Best Envroirmcntal Achievements

1020. SHRI MOHAN BABU: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is any proposal under Government's consideration to institute district-wise awards all over the country. for best environmental achievements in 1996-97;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether Government are monitoring the afforestation efforts all over the country; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI RAJESH PILOT): (a) and (b) The Ministry of Environment and Forests has announced an award called "Zile Ki Sabse'Hari Panchayat" to be given to that Panchayat in each district of the country which shows the best afforestation effort. The award is aimed to encourage tree plantation on community or public lands within the jurisdiction of Panchayats and shall carry cash prize of Rs. 1 lac to the best panchayat in each district assessed on the basis of